

## Inclusive Home Design Act of 2002

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On October 16, 2002, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-III.) introduced H.R. 5683, the Inclusive Home Design Act of 2002. If enacted, the legislation would require all newly constructed, federally assisted, single-family houses and townhouses to meet minimum standards of visitability. Visitability is a concept whereby newly built homes must have at least one no-step entrance and an accessible powder room on the main level.

While the Fair Housing Act Amendments of 1988 ensured that new, multifamily construction would be accessible to people with mobility impairments, it did not apply to the thousands of single-family homes and townhouses that have been developed in the ensuing years. As a result, a person with a physical disability is often barred from visiting family, friends, and colleagues whose homes were not built with common, easy-to-incorporate accessibility features.

H.R. 5683 has the potential to benefit millions of Americans beyond people with permanent disabilities. As the nation's population ages, increasing numbers of individuals will experience mobility impairments. This legislation could permit them to "age in place."

In addition, thousands of people each year find themselves temporarily disabled through accidents or illness. Barrier-free entrances to their homes and accessible bathrooms on the main level could assist in their recovery by helping them avoid further injury.

Congresswoman Schakowsky has vowed to pursue this legislation in the 108th Congress.